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NEWS RELEASE

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Immigration Hearing Training Held in Philadelphia **Latest in Series to Improve Representation Before Immigration Courts** *Model Hearing Program Also Seeks to Increase Pro Bono Participation*

PHILADELPHIA – A recent training program held at the Philadelphia Immigration Court is the latest in a series of nationwide training sessions to improve the quality of attorney representation of aliens facing removal proceedings and to increase the level of pro bono representation to assist individuals with their cases.

The training program was sponsored by the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), which oversees the nation's immigration court system, and the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). The Philadelphia program was coordinated and planned by EOIR's Legal Access Counsel, Steven Lang, and AILA's local Pro Bono Committee, including Professor Marisa S. Cianciarulo, director of the Villanova University Law School's Immigration Clinic, as well as Jocelyn Auerbach and Anna Paciorek, Philadelphia attorneys.

Twenty Philadelphia area attorneys attended the afternoon session. All were experienced in their respective legal fields, but with varying levels of immigration experience. The program provided practical hands-on immigration court training as a basis for their accepting future pro bono asylum cases in which they will represent immigration clients with the assistance of an experienced mentor.

Philadelphia Immigration Judge Charles M. Honeyman presided over the May 26 program, which included an overview of removal proceedings and immigration court procedure. The training included a mock hearing of a hypothetical case involving an asylum seeker from Cameroon. A number of volunteer attorneys from Philadelphia represented their "client," and Ira Mazer, a Department of Homeland Security trial attorney from Philadelphia presented the government's case against the asylum seeker.

The model hearing was similar to more than 20 training sessions that have been conducted since 2001 through EOIR's Model Hearing Program, training nearly 200 attorneys, law students, and representatives accredited to assist individuals in immigration proceedings.

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These sessions have been held in nine locations throughout the country, including Philadelphia and York, Pa.

EOIR's Model Hearing Program is part of the agency's Legal Access Program, which includes the Legal Orientation Program, in which representatives from local nonprofit organizations provide comprehensive explanations about immigration court procedures and other basic legal information to large groups of detained individuals; the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) Pro Bono Project, which recruits pro bono legal assistance for immigration detainees in presenting their cases before the BIA; and the Unaccompanied Alien Children initiative, which coordinates with agencies to identify and resolve issues involving children in removal proceedings.

Additional information on EOIR's Legal Access Program is available in a fact sheet on EOIR's website at <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/subject.htm>.

– EOIR –

EOIR is responsible for adjudicating immigration cases. Specifically, under delegated authority from the Attorney General, EOIR interprets and administers federal immigration laws by conducting immigration court proceedings, appellate reviews, and administrative hearings. EOIR consists of three components: the Office of the Chief Immigration Judge, which is responsible for managing the numerous immigration courts located throughout the United States where immigration judges adjudicate individual cases; the Board of Immigration Appeals, which primarily conducts appellate reviews of immigration judge decisions; and the Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer, which adjudicates immigration-related employment cases. EOIR is committed to providing fair, expeditious, and uniform application of the nation's immigration laws in all cases.

Information about EOIR immigration proceedings is available on EOIR's website <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/subject.htm>.